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City councillors mixed bag on possibility of tax freeze

Differing views.
Tax freeze likely a long shot, several councillors say, while others say it will happen for a third consecutive year

ANGELA MULLINS
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Will we get to zero? Depends who you ask.

London city councillors offered a mixed bag of responses when asked if Thursday's budget vote will freeze taxes.

Several politicians, including some who have backed the drive toward zero like Coun. Bud Polhill, say chances of a third consecutive tax freeze have been all but dashed from this year's budget.

"I don't think anyone on our council, including the mayor, believes (we'll get to zero)," Polhill said. "I think that 0.8 per cent, 0.9 per cent, will be the best we're going to get."

Coun. Paul Hubert
CONTRIBUTED

Coun. Bud Polhill
CONTRIBUTED

Councillors Denise Brown, Joe Swan, Sandy White and Bill Armstrong all told Metro they didn't think the tax freeze was possible.

The spending plan, expected to be approved Thursday, is as efficient as it can be, some councillors said. And putting less money into savings — a controversial 11th-hour move that trimmed the 2012 tax bill — has very little, if any, support.

So what's the magic tax number going to be? That also depends who you ask.

A 1.2 per cent tax increase — $30 for the average homeowner — was on the table after a final budget debate earlier this month. Getting to zero from there would mean cutting or finding new revenue worth about $5.6 million.

Some councillors consider that mark the best-case — and most fiscally responsible — scenario.

Several, like Polhill, are predicting an increase of about one per cent or slightly less.

Treasurer Martin Hayward has found additional savings, likely money left over from 2012, that could help bridge the gap, some councillors said. But there won't be enough money to plod the full course.

Others aren't counting zero out just yet.

Coun. Paul Hubert, who hasn't backed the drive, is betting "a rabbit will be pulled from a hat" to get there. "It will look good on the surface, but will not fulfil some key principles of prudent fiscal policy," he said in an email.

Coun. Paul Van Meerbergen hasn't lost hope, saying taxpayers "simply cannot bear (an) increase."

But a small tax hike wouldn't be a failure on council's part, several other councillors said.

Budget deliberations started with $20 million in savings or new revenue needed to hold the status quo.

Good work has been done in the past three months, White said.

"I've always said I supported (getting to zero) if it meant finding efficiencies and spending more wisely," she said. "We should be proud of the efficiencies we've found."

Coun. Paul Van Meerbergen
CONTRIBUTED

Coun. Sandy White
CONTRIBUTED

Mayor's town hall, page 2

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NEWS 1

Finalist

Help abused women's centre win donation

The London Abused Women's Centre is a finalist in the Share the Bounty National Giveaway by Nature's Bounty Canada, and it needs votes to win a charitable donation from the nutritional supplement company.

Through March 29, visitors can vote daily at sharethebounty.ca.

Three prizes will be given to the charities with the highest number of votes. The grand prize is $20,000, second prize is $10,000 and third prize is $5,000. All other finalists will be entered in a random draw for a $5,000 donation.

Winners will be announced April 24.

JIM REYNO/METRO

Thames Valley

School board donates $337.5K to United Way

United Way agencies of Elgin-St. Thomas, London-Middlesex and Oxford have received a donation of $337,533 from the staff and students of the Thames Valley District School Board.

The funds will be divided among the three agencies based on where the money was contributed so that the agencies across Thames Valley can help to meet local needs.

Students raised funds through various activities including the United Way StairClimb and the annual United Way football games.

More than 80 per cent of the total was raised through staff payroll contributions. METRO

Pretty (supportive) in pink

Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School Grade 12 student Kyle Leeming, 17, gives Grade 9 student Kayla Barker, 14, a pink makeover as Selma Djublic, 14, looks on during Pink Shirt Day on Wednesday. The nationwide effort to promote tolerance started after a Nova Scotia student was bullied in 2007 and classmates started wearing pink to show their support. Banting's Social Justice Club organized a variety of events Wednesday to curb bullying. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

More info sought on SoHo pitch

Development. Planning committee requests staff report before OK'ing zoning request

ANGELA MULLINS
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Some city politicians are looking for more details before paving the way for a large-scale South Street development.

Council's planning committee wants a staff report on several issues, including phasing of the proposal, before weighing in on a request to rezone property.

"There's too many loose ends for some people," said Coun. Bud Polhill, who chairs the planning committee. "I thought we should have just gone ahead with it and then dealt with all the loose ends in subsequent meetings when we do the final approvals."

If full council approves getting a staff report, it's expected to be ready by May.

Fincore Canada wants to build a sprawling medical, commercial and residential complex at Wellington and South streets. The development would stretch about 200 metres east along the Thames River to nearly Waterloo Street.

Timeline

- Fincore Canada's proposed development at Wellington and South streets would take years to build, officials say.
- A spokeswoman said it will take about three years alone to complete the first phase, the 26-storey tower on the development's west side.

It would include a 26-storey tower on the west end with medical offices, condos and retail space. The east end of the property would be home to an 18-storey building with condos and assisted-living space for seniors.

Townhouses, along with retail space, would be spread between the high-rises.

While several people living nearby like the idea and are excited about new development, some have raised a host of concerns, including the fact that Fincore wants to rezone land it doesn't own yet.

Letting that happen could restrict future proposals if Fincore's plans fall through, some say.

The company will work with city staff to make sure politicians' concerns are addressed, spokeswoman Julie Meisner said.

Misconduct. Methadone doctor to face reprimand

The co-founder of a company trying to open a London methadone clinic is facing disciplinary action from the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons.

A committee ruled Feb. 19 that Michael Varenbut committed professional misconduct when he "unreasonably" delayed a patient's access to methadone and took too long to decide if she would be allowed to re-enter treatment. The situation played out over several months in 2008 and 2009.

Varenbut, who helped found Ontario Addiction Treatment Centres in 1995, has been ordered to appear before the committee "to be reprimanded" and must pay $14,600 to the college.

The doctor intends to stop practising methadone treatment and has started transferring patients to other physicians, according to the college.

Ontario Addiction Treatment Centres wants to open up a new clinic at 425 Wharncliffe Rd. S.

City council approved rezoning for the property last year. The company has not submitted a proposed site plan, according to the city.

ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Mayor defends meeting in virtual town hall

If Mayor Joe Fontana could have screamed it from the rafters Wednesday, he likely would have: There was no "secret meeting" of city politicians at Billy T's Tap & Grill.

"You're right, the optics might not look ... very good, but I can assure you it was not a planned meeting," Fontana said during a town-hall-meeting broadcast on his website.

The mayor spent a portion of the broadcast — scheduled to talk about Thursday's impending 2013 budget vote — taking questions from people about the lunch gathering.

Joe Fontana CONTRIBUTED

Ombudsman André Marin, the province's open-meetings watchdog, received eight complaints about the lunch Tuesday. The number has since risen to 34. The complaints are under review. Marin hasn't said if there will be an investigation.

Asked by a town-hall participant why companies would want to come to London given allegations of back-room meetings, the mayor was quick to praise council for doing "a lot of great work."

Not a day goes by without a call from someone interested in opening a business, Fontana said. "Anyone who says differently doesn't know what the hell they're talking about." ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Teen charged in BB-gun holdups

Replica looked real. Boy pointed gun at two other teenagers and stole a bike: Police

ANGELA MULLINS
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A 13-year-old boy is facing a slew of criminal charges after police say he pointed a BB gun at two other teens during separate Tuesday incidents.

Police were called at about 12:10 p.m. to St. Francis Catholic School (690 Osgoode Dr.) where the suspect allegedly aimed the gun at a 14-year-old student and then left the property.

About 20 minutes later, staff from Wilton Grove Public School (626 Osgoode Dr.) called police and reported that a 14-year-old had been approached by someone with a weapon at a strip mall near Southdale Road East and Adelaide Street. The suspect threatened the victim and stole a bicycle, police alleged.

The gun was not fired in either incident.

Serious consequences

The 13-year-old boy accused of pointing a BB gun at two teens Tuesday has been charged with:

- Pointing a firearm
- Weapons dangerous
- Armed robbery
- Threats

No injuries were reported.

The 13-year-old suspect, whose name can't be released because of his age, was arrested at about 1:35 p.m. at his home, where police found the stolen bike and the BB gun.

At least one of the victims thought the BB gun was a real firearm, Const. Ken Steeves said. That's a concern, Steeves said, especially since police were looking for a suspect with that in mind.

"We have to make split-second decisions sometimes, and there's potential for tragedy," he said.

Tuesday's calls to police marked the third and fourth this month stemming from weapons that looked like firearms.

Police responded Feb. 7 to Wharncliffe Road and Emery Street and then to Wellington Road and Bradley Avenue on weapons reports. In each case the person was carrying a replica firearm, police said.

"Aside from the significant resources that are committed to gun calls, the consequences of a police officer engaging a person armed with what entirely appears to be a real gun could be devastating," Chief Brad Duncan said at the time.

Dangerous game

"Aside from the significant resources that are committed to gun calls, the consequences of a police officer engaging a person armed with what entirely appears to be a real gun could be devastating."

Chief Brad Duncan, about previous calls made to police regarding weapons that looked like firearms.

MORE LOCAL NEWS AT METRONEWS.CA

He's a saucy one

Shawn Calder, 31, of London, a second-year culinary management student at Fanshawe College, tastes a sauce Wednesday during an Iron Chef-style competition at the school. The food throwdown pitted eight teams of students and area restaurant chefs against each other in a three-course battle. First place went to chef Robert Stewart from the Petit Paris Creperie & Patisserie at the Covent Garden Market, with Fanshawe College student Saida Sayd. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Porsche driver. Police lay charges after multiple car crash last November

A London woman faces several charges after a multiple-car and multiple-intersection crash last year.

On Nov. 12, police responded to a collision at the intersection of Highbury Avenue and Oxford Street between a Porsche and a Toyota Corolla.

The Porsche driver allegedly continued south on Highbury, drove over a green space on the east side, merged back onto Highbury, and continued south toward Dundas Street at a high rate of speed.

At the Highbury-Dundas intersection the Porsche hit a Chrysler, and then left the road and collided with two parked, unoccupied vehicles in a lot at the southwest corner of the intersection, police said.

The Porsche driver suffered life-threatening injuries. The occupants of the Chrysler, a 65-year-old male driver and a 28-year-old female passenger, had non-life-threatening injuries. The male driver of the Corolla wasn't hurt.

Cham Phou, 31, has been charged with two counts each of dangerous operation of a motor vehicle and criminal negligence causing bodily harm, taking a vehicle without consent, and leaving the scene of an accident.

JIM REYNO/METRO

Speed, road conditions

Driver killed wasn't wearing seatbelt: Police

London police said a driver killed as a result of an accident wasn't wearing a seatbelt.

On Friday night, a Toyota Corolla carrying three men was going south on White Oak Road, north of Westminster Drive, when it crossed the centre line and rolled over in a ditch.

Two 20-year-old passengers were treated for minor injuries. The driver, 19, suffered life-threatening injuries and died Saturday. At the request of his family, the driver's name won't be released.

Police said only the two passengers were wearing seatbelts, and that speed and road conditions were both factors. Alcohol could also have been a factor, police said. METRO

Man, 28, found dead inside northeast home

London police are trying to figure out if an altercation early Wednesday had anything to do with the death of a 28-year-old man later that morning.

After receiving a 911 call at 7:45 a.m on Wednesday, police found the dead man inside a home located at 807 Dufferin Ave.

The deceased has been transported to London Health Sciences Centre, where an autopsy is scheduled for Thursday. Police said the deceased's name was not being released for the time being because his next of kin had not yet been notified.

The investigation is ongoing, but police allege an altercation between the deceased and a suspect occurred in the early morning hours of Wednesday. Both parties were known to each other.

The cause of death, Const. Ken Steeves said, is to be determined.

"If he were stabbed, if he were shot, that would almost be obvious," Steeves said. "There's no obvious cause of death. More information will be released as we learn it."

JOHN MATISZ/METRO

How you can help

- Anyone with information in relation to this incident is asked to call the London Police Service at 519-661-5670.
- You can also call Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477).
- Information can also be sent anonymously to London-crimestoppers.com.

Regular season ending early for Knights pest Matt Rupert

Charging. Forward will miss first game of playoffs under 10-game suspension

JOHN MATISZ
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It was a messy weekend in the Ontario Hockey League, and London Knights forward Matt Rupert was in the forefront of it all.

The OHL has handed out suspensions worth a total of 31 games for incidents in matches taking place Friday through Sunday. The length of another suspension, a minimum of two games for Barrie Colts star Mark Scheifele, has yet to be decided.

Rupert will be unable to suit up for London until Game 2 of the OHL playoffs. His 10-game suspension — assessed for essentially jumping at the head of Saginaw's Steven Strong in the second period of Sunday's game — is the longest banishment for a Knights player this season.

The 18-year-old twin from Grand Bend was not made available to the media on Wednesday, but the team's assistant general manager Rob Simpson offered some insight.

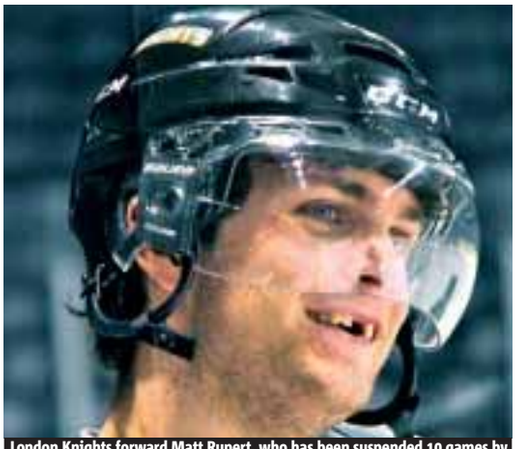
"I think the league took a look at it and made their decision based on what they saw from the hit," Simpson said. "And we follow the league and what they want to do."

The Knights will likely lock up first place overall in the OHL, so Rupert's absence for the first nine games of his suspension won't be detrimental. But not having him in the lineup for Game 1 of the post-season is another story.

"It's going to be tough losing him for the first game," Simpson added, "but we have a good team and hopefully we'll be able to adapt."

Season's suspensions

- **Kevin Raine** — 6 games (boarding), 3 games (kneeing)
- **Miles Liberati** — 2 (fighting)
- **Alex Broadhurst** — 1 (slew-footing)
- **Ryan Rupert** — 3 (abusing an official)
- **Corey Pawley** — 8 (checking to head)
- **Paxton Leroux** — 2 (instigating fight)
- **Matt Rupert** — 10 (charging)



London Knights forward Matt Rupert, who has been suspended 10 games by the OHL, chats with teammates while taking a breather during practice at Budweiser Gardens on Wednesday. JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Short bench

Team's depth to be tested in remaining games

Thursday
At: Family Credit Union Centre, 7:05 p.m.
Versus: Windsor Spitfires
Record: 24-29-1-6
The hot hand: Kerby Rychel (35 goals, 42 assists)

Friday
At: Budweiser Gardens, 7:30 p.m.
Versus: Sarnia Sting
Record: 33-25-0-3
The hot hand: Charles Sarault (20 goals, 77 assists)

Sunday
At: Budweiser Gardens, 2 p.m.
Versus: Kitchener Rangers
Record: 35-17-1-7
The hot hand: Josh Leivo (26 goals, 40 assists)

Over the course of the next couple of weeks, the London Knights brass will be able to get a handle on how deep their talent pool truly is.

London's most valuable pieces, leading scorer Seth Griffith (hand) and captain Scott Harrington (upper body), are shelved for at least another week thanks to injuries. Top-six forward Matt Rupert is gone until Game 2 of the opening round of the playoffs due to a suspension.

Meanwhile, a trio of important matches await. First, the Knights battle a depleted Windsor team; second they face Sarnia, a squad that has had their number as of late; and then they meet their rival Kitchener for a final faceoff.

"It's going to be hard without them in the lineup," Knights winger Brett Welychka said. "But, if you look back at how we did when the guys were gone (to the world juniors) in December, it's kind of the same thing."

If Matt Rupert's brother Ryan registers two more points, the Knights will have eight players on their roster with at least 40 points for the first time since the 2007-08 season.

"We've got good depth that way," London head coach Dale Hunter said. "On any given night, all of the guys can score. They don't get as much ice time, but our fourth liners (Remi Elie and Kyle Platzer) have given us balanced scoring."

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Honoured for their sacrifice

Capt. Steve Ricketts, left, receives his Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal from Capt. Sheridan Atkinson, centre, and Col. Biel Pettipas at the Wolseley Barracks on Wednesday. The Royal Canadian Regiment held a ceremony to recognize Ricketts and three other medal recipients: Maj. John O'Quinn, Sgt. Russ Smith, and Sgt. Abe Van Veen. JOHN MATISZ/METRO

Thames Valley

School board gets Canadian Forces award

The Thames Valley District School Board has received a provincial award from the Canadian Forces Liaison Council in recognition of its outstanding support of the Canadian Forces Reserves. **METRO**

Play & reception

Black history fundraiser opens curtains Saturday

The London Black History Coordinating Committee is holding a To Kill a Mockingbird fundraising reception and performance at Palace Theatre (710 Dundas St.) on Saturday. **METRO**

Layoffs

Politicians rally for Diamond Aircraft

Politicians of all stripes are vowing to fight for the viability of Diamond Aircraft.

Roughly 200 people were laid off at Diamond on Monday as a result of the suspension of the D-JET program. **AM980/AM980.CA**

Swiss set to rethink laws after man's gun rampage

U.S.-style shock. Longtime employee dies after killing two with pistol at company in a small town

Fears about U.S.-style mass gun killings gripped Switzerland on Wednesday after a longtime employee opened fire at a wood-processing company.

The shooting left three people dead, including the assailant, in the country's second multiple-fatality shooting in two months.

And it happened as the Swiss parliament prepares to consider tightening some aspects of the country's famously lax gun legislation.

The country has a long-standing tradition for men to keep their military rifles after completing compulsory military service.

This partly accounts for the high rate of gun ownership in the country, where some 2.3 million firearms are owned by a population of about eight million.

On Wednesday, the 42-year-old Swiss man opened fire at the company Kronospan in the small town of Menznau. He drew a pistol and started firing, police said.

Seven people were wounded, six of them seriously.

Officials did not know how the assailant was killed.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Substance ID'd. Pistorius used a herbal sex aid?

The substance found in the Blade Runner's bedroom after the shooting death of his girlfriend has been named.

Oscar Pistorius' representatives say it was Testis compositum — a herbal remedy for "muscle recovery."

A product called Testis compositum is also marketed as a sexual enhancer. Some online retailers advertise oral and injectable forms.

Tablets sold in the U.S. are said to contain 23 ingredients, including pig testicles, pig heart and pig embryo.

Paralympic star Pistorius is charged with murder in the shooting death of girlfriend Reeva Steenkamp.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Police fire at shark as man dies

Amid a frenzy of spray, police in an inflatable life-raft fire shots at a shark as it attacks a swimmer near Auckland, New Zealand. Police said the victim was found dead in the water. ROSS LAND/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

New Zealand police fired gunshots at a monster shark on Wednesday in a desperate attempt to save a swimmer.

The four-metre shark "rolled over and disappeared," said police Insp. Shawn Rutene. But the victim, award-winning television and short-film director Adam Strange, 46, didn't survive.

Pio Mose, who was fishing at the popular Muriwai Beach near Auckland, said he saw the swimmer struggle against the huge shark. He yelled at the man to swim to the rocks, but it was too late.

"All of a sudden there was blood everywhere," Mose said. "I was shaking, scared, panicked."

Rutene said police went out in inflatable lifesaving boats and shot at the shark.

Government shark expert Clinton Duffy said New Zealand is a hotspot for great white sharks and other lethal species.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Corruption case. Former spy-agency watchdog wanted in fraud probe

The man once entrusted to keep an eye on Canada's spy agency is now wanted by police and extradition procedures are underway in the hope of bringing him back to face criminal charges in this country.

An arrest warrant is out for Arthur Porter, the former head of the CSIS watchdog agency, for alleged fraud in one of the country's most expensive infrastructure projects.

He is among the five people named in arrest warrants issued Wednesday by Quebec's anti-corruption squad, in the case of the $1.3-billion construction of a Montreal mega-hospital.

The others are: Former SNC Lavalin senior executives Pierre Duhaime and Riadh Ben Aissa, Yanai Elbaz, and Jeremy Morris, the administrator of a Bahamas-based investment company. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Order of Canada

High honour taken from theatre mogul

Disgraced theatre impresario Garth Drabinsky has been stripped of his Order of Canada appointment and is going to court to fight the decision he says is unfair, considering his imprisonment.

Drabinsky was released to a Toronto halfway house earlier this month. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Recruitment centre

Arrest made in connection to Quebec bombing

A man has been arrested in connection with the bombing of a Canadian Forces recruitment centre in Quebec in 2010, the RCMP said Wednesday. RCMP Cpl. Luc Thibault said four locations that were searched were linked to the Trois-Rivières bombing, which resulted in material damage but no injuries. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Anti-gay activist gets hit with ruling by Canada's top court

Human rights. William Whatcott rapped for two of four pamphlets he distributed

A Saskatchewan anti-gay crusader violated human-rights rules when he distributed some pamphlets denouncing homosexuals, the Supreme Court of Canada has ruled.

In a unanimous 6-0 decision Wednesday, the court found that two of the four flyers distributed by William Whatcott violated Saskatchewan's Human Rights Code. Those flyers referred to gay men as sodomites and pedophiles.

But the court struck down some language in the provincial code, clearing Whatcott of any wrongdoing in connection with two other flyers. THE CANADIAN PRESS

The Supreme Court decision means Saskatchewan anti-gay crusader William Whatcott will have to pay one complainant $2,500 and another $5,000.

MICHAEL REICHEL/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sentenced. Fatal crash lands man three years

A man convicted after a crash that killed four high-school football players from northern Alberta has been sentenced to three years in prison.

Brenden Holubowich will also be forbidden to drive for three years once he is released. Holubowich, 23, pleaded guilty to dangerous driving causing death and dangerous driving causing bodily harm. Court of Queen's Bench Justice William Tilleman said determining a sentence for Holubowich might have been the most difficult thing he has ever done.

Tilleman's eyes filled with tears as he told court he sympathized with the dead teens' relatives, who had suggested that a three-year sentence would not be enough. He also said he felt for Holubowich's family. Tilleman said he struggled with his decision and at one point considered a longer period behind bars. But in the end, the judge said, the sentence jointly submitted by the Crown and defence was just and in keeping with similar cases. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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‘Breathable’ nail polish finds an unexpected niche

Surprise solution. Product developed as healthier alternative to traditional enamel is a hit with Muslim women

For Zaida Saleh, like for many observant Muslim women, manicures have long posed a religious problem.

With prayers five times a day, and a pre-prayer ritual that requires washing the hands and arms, traditional fingernail polish has been mostly off-limits because it prevents water from making contact with the nails. A new “breathable” nail polish by a Polish company, Inglot, is changing that.

The company and some Muslims say the polish is the first of its kind because it lets air and moisture pass through to the nail. A craze has built up around it with Muslim women in recent months after an Islamic scholar in the United States tested its permeability and published an article saying that, in his view, it complies with Muslim law.

A manicure in progress at an Inglot shop in Warsaw, Poland. Since an Islamic scholar wrote that, in his view, Inglot’s O2M nail polish complied with Muslim law, the product has become very popular with Muslim women. CZAREK SOKOLOWSKI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

“It’s huge,” said Saleh, a 35-year-old who hadn’t polished her nails in many years but immediately went out and bought the product in five colours, including a bright pink, a burgundy and a mauve. “I am excited. I feel more feminine — and I just love it.”

The news of Inglot’s breathable polish has spread quickly from woman to woman and over the Internet.

The nail polish now stands as one of the final life achievements of Wojciech Inglot, a Polish chemist and entrepreneur who developed it to create what he billed as a healthier alternative to traditional nail enamels, which block the passage of moisture and oxygen to the nail. He died suddenly on Saturday at the age of 57 after suffering internal hemorrhaging.

Though the Muslim holy book, the Qur’an, does not specifically address the issue of nail polish, some Islamic scholars have said that water must touch the surface of the nail for the washing ritual to be done correctly. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beer. Miller to end deal with Molson in Canada

Miller Brewing Company says it’s aiming to end its Canadian licensing agreement with Molson Coors Canada this summer. The agreement covers such well-known brands as Millers Genuine Draft, Miller Lite and Miller High Life. Miller’s managing director for Canada, Paul Gurr, says there’s an opportunity to grow its brands in Canada. “We see Canada as a country with a rich tradition of beer appreciation and believe we can better serve Canadians’ needs through this transition,” Gurr said in a statement.

Molson Coors Canada has filed a suit in Ontario to prevent the move but Miller says it gave the required six-month notification in January. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Miller plans to end its Canadian licensing agreement with Molson Coors Canada. GETTY IMAGES FILE

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A GATHERING OF EH?-LIST ACTORS

HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

This is the biggest week in the entertainment industry, what with the awards and the stars and the fashions and the national pride: Of course, I'm talking about the first-ever Canadian Screen Awards. What else could I mean?

Oh, right, that Oscars thing.

Hey, the Academy Awards are fine. It's one of the best opportunities to taunt people who are richer, handsomer and more talented than us, and then tsk-tsk their behaviour if they respond with anything but a sexy smile. Such fun.

But shouldn't we get behind Canada's own movies and TV shows just as much as we get behind Hollywood's? This year the Canadian Screen Awards bring the Geminis and Genies together, offering up the coveted Geminenie.

Dull inauguration

I know, I know. You assume that because it's Canadian it must be staid and boring.

I know, I know. You assume that because it's Canadian it must be staid and boring. But I've seen an advanced screening of the awards and I can assure you that, while distinctly Canadian, it also has many familiar echoes to this year's Oscars:

Red carpet. I don't want to give away too much about the glitz and glamour, but David Cronenberg had everybody talking with a sheer blue outfit that left NOTHING to the imagination.

Comedy. The show's host, Martin Short, followed the edgy comedy of recent controversial hosts like Ricky Gervais and Seth MacFarlane, getting in sharp jabs about how he "doesn't care" for the new $20 bill — a sensitive topic (the bill has the Queen on it) that had the audience gasping. After several people called out "too soon!" Short apologized but kept them smiling with a few digs at the Upper Canada rebellion of 1837, something everybody can appreciate.

Lifetime achievement. On the TV side of things, there was a long-standing ovation for Zeddy the Zellers bear, recently retired after 25 years of television commercial performances that the Globe and Mail has called "stunning in their intertwined intimacy and ferocity." Kudos, Zeddy.

Big winners. I'm sworn to secrecy, but these were the nominees for Canadian film of the year:

- **Argo.** The story of a Toronto football team that wins the Canadian Football League trophy entirely because of American bravery and ingenuity.
- **Beasts of the Northern Mild.** A young girl must use all her optimism and imagination when nature flies out of whack and hits Toronto with seven centimetres of snow. With the city in chaos and her dad wailing in annoyance, she heads out in search of her mother, who is at a mysterious and distant shopping mall.
- **Clark.** Daniel Day-Lewis stars as the 16th prime minister of Canada in a country torn asunder by both access-to-information legislation AND a gas tax. Will it survive? Day-Lewis has earned plaudits for his ability to capture Joe Clark's complete lack of charisma.
- **L'eh Misérables.** In this much-loved musical set against the backdrop of the 1995 referendum, French students from Quebec sing about their doomed fight against the federal government in such well-known numbers as On Our Own, One Vote More and Do You Hear the People Secede? Just like secession talk, it's loud, repetitive and goes on far too long.
- **Zero Dark Thirty in Newfoundland.** The thrilling story of a Canadian secret-ops team that kills its targets a half-hour earlier than other countries.

If you want to know who wins, you'll have to watch this Sunday.

Anything can happen, eh?

Exclusively online

- Read more of John Mazerolle at metronews.ca/voices

She's having a whale of a time

RICCARDO TINELLI

Marine photography

Sea dancing with friendly whales

The thought of swimming next to a 35-tonne humpback whale and its calf in the open ocean would fill anyone with dread, but for French navigator Maud Fontenoy, her mind was at ease.

This amazing image shows the 35-year-old marine activist and mother of one snorkelling beside the whales just off the island of Moorea in French Polynesia. METRO

Q and A

MAUD FONTENOY
French sailor and ocean conservation activist

Humpbacks are harmless

Fontenoy — the first woman to have crossed, by rowing, the North Atlantic Ocean and Pacific Ocean, and now a marine conservation activist for UNESCO — spoke to Metro about her swim.

Amazing photo of you with the whales. Were you not frightened of them?
I was afraid at first, but at the same time I knew straight away that these whales mean no harm and that I was in no danger.

I had to abandon my diving equipment on account of the bubbles produced by the breathing device. The whales are noise-sensitive and the bubbles would have disturbed them. Instead, I used a snorkelling mask and flippers.

How did this aid your efforts in marine conservation?
Each time we can show the beauty of nature, it's a way to make people aware of the similarity between humans and the ocean.

What everyday task can I do to help conserve our oceans?
You can choose to eat fish that aren't endangered. Also, you can help conserve water by using green detergents for your washing machines and avoiding overpackaged plastic items. METRO

Metropolitan Panel

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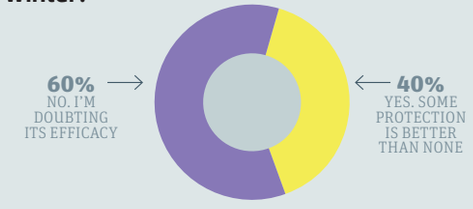
Will you be getting the flu shot next winter?



Twitter

@aliforis: Everyone going outside today. Wear rain boots or plastic bags over your shoes. My socks are soaked through and it sucks

@alexisvozza: sent my reference letters to humber over a month ago and they said I still need to send them.... nah #fanshawe !!!

@xtinarelke: Who is making fun of my Hunter Boots now? #slushy #winning #WesternU #LdnOnt

@ShyDi47: How I look forward to my night class tonight hopefully the weather will have tapered off by than #Fanshawe

@techman75: It's just one of those slushy wish it were spring days so I can mess with the OTA stuff on the roof. #ldnont

@Abbi_Lez: Anyone in #ldnont know of a place that makes old school fresh donuts?

metro
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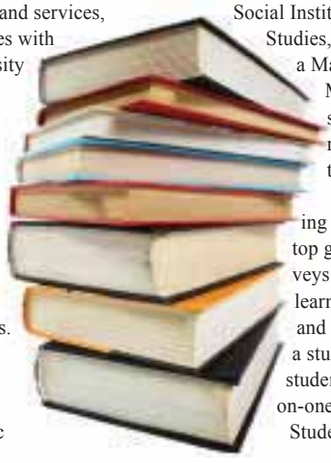
KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AT WESTERN UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1954, King's University College is a Catholic, co-educational, liberal arts university college affiliated with Western University. King's affiliation with Western University not only allows students to have access to all university-wide facilities and services, but also provides graduates with a degree from the University of Western Ontario.

Located in London, Ontario, King's has 3,300 full-time and 400 part-time students from all faiths and backgrounds who enjoy the benefits of small classes, personal interactions with professors, and quality programs. As a community that values personal connections while maintaining a high standard of academic excellence, King's truly offers the best of both worlds.



Degree programs are offered in liberal arts education in areas such as Business, Accounting, Social Sciences, Arts, Childhood and Social Institutions, Social Justice and Peace Studies, and Social Work, as well as a Master's degree in Social Work.

More than 97 per cent of King's students are employed in a field related to their studies within two years of graduation.

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Students with academic or financial concerns can meet personally with a counsellor. King's offers a generous scholarship and bursary program, and guarantees an Entrance Scholarship to students with admission averages higher than 82 per cent. Students looking to travel abroad while earning their degree can also take advantage of the international study options at King's.

Plan to atend Welcome Day on Saturday, May 4 from 1 to 3:30 p.m. The day begins with opening remarks, opportunities to chat with faculty, academics, admissions and financial counsellors, and other King's community members including students. The day concludes with a tour of the campus, conducted by a King's student tour guide. Visit http://kings.uwo.ca/future-students/welcome-days/ to reserve your spot.

Join us for King's Welcome Days
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6:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Saturday March 9, 2013
1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
• Talk to professors, students and staff about academic programs and student life.
• Tour the campus.
• Experience the King's/Western advantage.
• To reserve your spot, please call 519.433.3491 x4312 or 1.800.265.4406 or e-mail kings@uwo.ca or visit www.kings.uwo.ca
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SCENE 2

Secret Stash marked by yarn bombing

Guerilla knitting. Art installation explores treasures and trash

BACKSTAGE PASS
Mila Petkovic
london@metronews.ca

Artist Kelly Wood's Vancouver Cart series will be featured at the Secret Stash exhibition at McIntosh Gallery, opening Thursday. KELLY WOOD

Tree trunks covered in brightly knitted cozies will mark the outside of a London gallery in an act of yarn bombing or guerrilla knitting — a practice used to draw attention to a space that might otherwise be overlooked.

The tree-sweaters will provide a colourful entrance to the exhibition Secret Stash: Accumulation, Hoarding and the Love of Stuff, opening Thursday at Western University's McIntosh Gallery.

Art professor Kirsty Robertson and curator of the exhibition wanted to get her students thinking about the labour behind the items of clothing we so easily throw away, so she taught 63 of her students how to knit. Working since October, and with help from the community, the class amassed 160 squares for the installation, which kicks off at 11:30 a.m.

The exhibition inside the gallery takes a playful look at North American consumption habits, our drive to collect and hoard and the contradictory feelings of guilt, comfort and greed that these items produce.

"We experience joy in owning things, but also feel the burden or weight of having so many things," said Robertson.

On the other hand, some have such limited resources that every item they own is carefully selected. Kelly Wood, an artist and professor at Western University, is showing large-scale photographs (four by six feet) of shopping carts that belong to inner city Vancouver homeless, as well as street workers involved in underground economy like collecting recyclables.

"There is a distinct personality to each cart. People collect in different ways and each stash tells a different story," said Wood, who found and shot more than 100 carts for her series over a period of six years.

Another stash-worthy item showcased by the exhibition is the sticker. Brooklyn artist Payton Turner has wallpapered the inside of the McIntosh Gallery with about 100,000 individually placed retro stickers.

"As a child collecting stickers, I would hold onto them, and I hid them in a secret spot in my room," said Turner, who started a design company specializing in original hand-drawn and hand-printed wallpapers called Flat Vernacular.

But what makes someone throw away a once coveted object, especially one that involved so much labour? Allyson Mitchell, a Toronto artist and professor at York University, explores this question through her art. Her installation Menstrual Hut Cinema is built out of heaps of colourful 1970s thrift store rugs, often handmade by women. Guests can crawl inside, cozy up on blankets and cushions and watch her films being screened inside.

The Secret Stash opening reception takes place on Thursday at 8 p.m. at McIntosh Gallery (1151 Richmond Street) and runs until April 6.

Around town

- **Music.** Don't miss APK's concert Thursday night featuring London artist Cladda, Man Forever from NYC and Holden Main. The event also showcases experimental cinema projections from the 1920s to 1960s (Man Ray, Marcel Duchamp and Norman McLaren). Tickets are $5 and doors open at 9 p.m.
- **And more music.** Enjoy a free live experimental music show featuring Curb and Suangi at the record store Hot Dog Musique and Cinema (256 Richmond St). Taking place just next door is the Steve Debruyn opening at Forest City Gallery. Both events start at 7 p.m. on Friday.

Justin Chon (right) reacts to a particularly enthusiastic pool shark in 21 & Over. HANDOUT/JOHN JOHNSON

Party at your own risk: 21 & Over actor takes a beating

Justin Chon. Star of raucous new comedy talks drinking games, stereotypes and gags involving the male anatomy

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

When actor Justin Chon sits down for our interview, he's coughing and looking a little worse for the wear. "I'm good," he insists. "I'm hungover, but I'm good." Promoting a film like 21 & Over — about his college student character's 21st birthday getting out of control, from the writers of The Hangover — can come with its own risks, apparently. But it's all part of the job.

Between being carried around, dropped out windows, Tasered and having a teddy bear glued to your crotch, you're taking the brunt of the abuse in this film.
Yeah. My performance is very much a physical comedic performance, and f—, man. I'm taking a lot of abuse. I mean, my head got hit on doors, I'm getting thrown everywhere.

The worst was (the scene where) we were in a smart car, and I had to be (squashed onto) the f—ing dashboard. To get in like that, I had to twist my neck around. And I'm claustrophobic, so that was the worst.

You also had to do a very painful penis gag, which is a staple for The Hangover guys.
Well, I'm grateful. At least they didn't give me a tiny pee-pee. They were like, "Rest assured, we made you well-endowed."
I looked at it and I was like, "Whoa. I don't know if my d— is that skin-tone, but cool."

How are you at drinking games in real life?
I've played them. But I'd much rather just drink, just get to the point. I don't need games. I guess it's just a way of getting people who don't want to drink to drink, but for me I've always been willing. So I'll just get myself drunk. It shouldn't be a punishment. It's a pleasure, it's part of being human. It's part of why we're alive.

Have you seen this movie with an audience yet?
Yeah, I saw a screening with an audience, but I mean, people who go to test screenings, sometimes it's tough to tell because they're kind of willingly going. So I want to see it with an audience who paid money. Because if they're not laughing, we're f—ed.

Suffering for his art

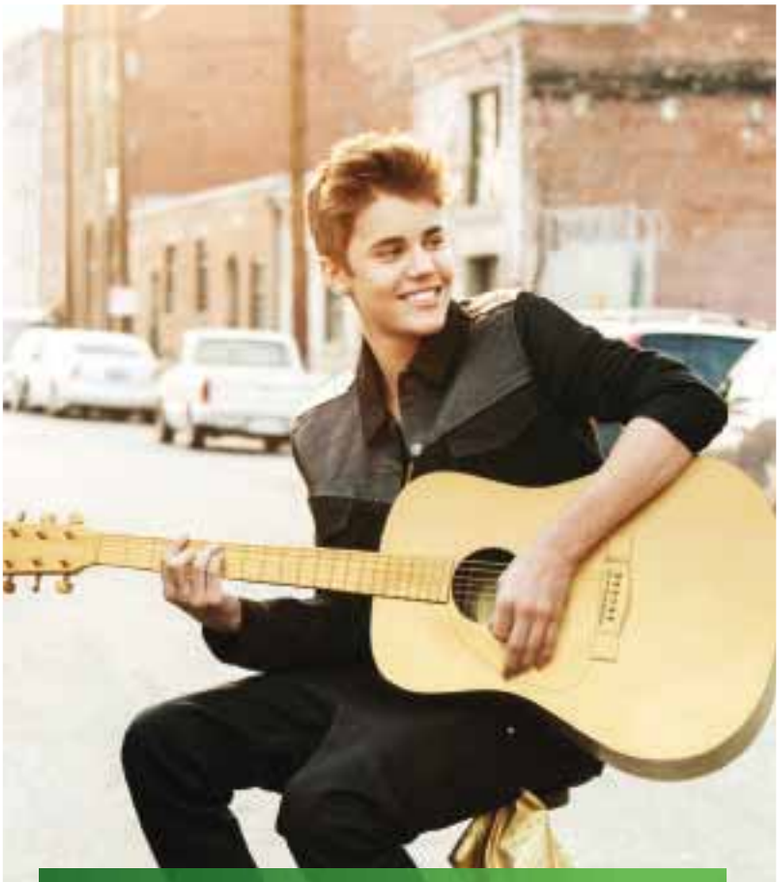
"My head got hit on doors, I'm getting thrown everywhere."

Justin Chon, actor in 21 & Over
explaining the physical demands of his role, which also involves being dropped out of windows and getting Tasered

There's a lot of the humour relating to you being Asian-American. Did anything go too far?
No, and that's what I love about (writers) Jon (Lucas) and Scott (Moore). When we did our first rehearsal, they sat me down and asked me if anything was too far or if anything rubbed me the wrong way. But no, I thought everything was great. I mean, you've got to be able to laugh at yourself. And I think people who take themselves too seriously are just ridiculous. I didn't feel like there were a lot of jokes at the expense of my race.

I've read some of the message boards and they're like, "Great, another stereotype." Dude, this (character) is against the grain. He sucks at school and he likes to party. He's an animal.

So I don't think that's very stereotypical to me. I'm like, "Dude, watch the f—ing movie before you say anything," you know? I'm proud of it. As an Asian-American I think it's a great role, and I fought hard to get it.



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2. Upload your photos by visiting www.clubmetro.com/Justin
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No purchase necessary. Contest open to residents of Canada and certain other countries worldwide who are thirteen (13) years of age or older. Odds of winning depend on the number and caliber of eligible entries received. One (1) Grand Prize is available to be won, consisting of a trip to see Justin Bieber perform and meet Justin Beiber (approximate retail value of $5,000 USD). Skill testing question required. Contest closes February 28, 2013 at 12,00AM CET. To enter and for complete contest rules visit www.facebook.com/metroint. Contest sponsors are Metro International S.A. together with its local Metro subsidiaries around the globe. The contest is in no way sponsored by Free Daily News Group Inc. or Pizza Pizza Limited. Neither Free Daily News Group Inc. nor Pizza Pizza Limited is responsible for this contest or its prize(s).

Carrie Fisher lands in hospital after strange cruise ship mishap

Star Wars star Carrie Fisher was reportedly hospitalized following a bizarre surprise appearance on a cruise ship, according to TMZ. "There was a medical incident related to Carrie Fisher's bipolar disorder," her rep says. "She went to hospital briefly to adjust her medication and is feeling much better now." Attendees at the show report that Fisher was meandering about on stage, rambling incoherently and singing off-key while her dog relieved itself next to her.

Carrie Fisher

Michael Sheen and Rachel McAdams ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

Another one bites the dust

Rachel McAdams and Michael Sheen have reportedly called it quits after more than two years of dating, according to Us Weekly. McAdams and Sheen first met while filming Woody Allen's Midnight in Paris together, though they didn't begin dating until later. "Michael and I didn't get together while we were filming Midnight in Paris, which I feel strongly about not doing when I'm working," McAdams told Stella magazine last year. "We became quite good friends, which I think is a great way to start." There was no word as to what led to their breakup. McAdams previously dated Ryan Gosling for two years after co-starring with him in The Notebook.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

Are Hemsworth and Cyrus done? Is Jones to blame?

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

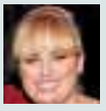
Attention Liam Hemsworth. If you're going to cheat on fiancée Miley Cyrus, don't do it at the Chateau Marmont. The Los Angeles hotel swarms daily with paparazzi and gossips; it's akin to taking out a billboard on I-95. Here's the dirt: Hemsworth (a.k.a. Mr. Miley To-Be) was seen getting "hot and heavy" with January Jones at a pre-Oscar party over the weekend, per Star magazine. "It looked like they had some hot chemistry," an eyewitness told the rag. "They were all over each other — and they even kissed!" For her part, Cyrus showed up at the Elton John AIDS Foundation's viewing party sans date on Sunday and "was all over the place" (code for wasted). So what does this mean? I'm not sure. All I know is that Hemsworth is 23, while Cyrus is 20. Sounds like appropriate behaviour for people barely out of their teens.

Twitter

@katyperry
If I were a cookie, I would be a thin mint girl scout cookie. FYI

@LilTunechi
Dam pit bull bro I thought u was kool.

@johncusack
Spell check hates me - always has



@RebelWilson
I got action onset with @channingtatum today. He is pure man steak luscious

Jennifer Lawrence

Is Jennifer Lawrence complaining?

There's no rest in sight for Oscar winner Jennifer Lawrence, who got right back in Hunger Games mode the day after nabbing a best actress statue. After filming the next film in the successful franchise, she's set to re-team with Silver Linings Playbook co-star Bradley Cooper and director David O. Russell in an FBI drama before putting on blue body paint for the next X-Men movie, which begins shooting in May. But all Lawrence wants to do is chill out. "I want to sit on my couch and drink and not change my pants for days," she tells E! News.

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While the start of the new season is still several weeks away, there's no reason you can't leap ahead on the calendar — at least fashionably speaking — by adding a touch of spring style to your winter wear. LouLou style editor Claude Laframboise says spring pieces are great for layering during winter, like wearing sleeveless or short-sleeved tops under jackets or cardigans. Here are five ways to dial up the warmth in your cold-weather looks.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Spring into winter

Pretty prints

It wouldn't be spring without a little flower power, and fashionable florals will once again be in full bloom — with a stylized update, of course. "What's newer is the bigger-scale floral print as opposed to the small dainty one," said Laframboise.

Many prints are also drawing inspiration from digital imagery, making them appear pixelated, reminiscent of an abstract print, he noted.

Torn between sporting stripes or polka dots? No need to choose when you can wear different patterns together.

Laframboise said the mixing of prints was an evolution of colour blocking, which involves teaming distinctive bright hues within one ensemble.

Individuals can get a jump start on spring now by trying their hand at combining seemingly contrasting prints — keeping in mind that complementary colours are key.

Black and white

The classic colour pairing made a splash on the spring runways and may be among the easiest trends to work into your wardrobe.

"It's not about wearing a white shirt and black pants," said Laframboise. "It's really about wearing a striped top with solid pants, or a crisp white shirt, but with a patterned skirt that would be black and white."

Laframboise said the pairing also acts as a good base for bright hues, like teaming a black-and-white striped top with another on-trend item like electric blue or hot pink jeans.

Expect to see many of the season's key prints like stripes, polka dots and floral prints steeped in black and white, he said.

Laframboise suggested opting for a heavier-weight striped jersey dress now, or perhaps sporting a silky, polka-dotted top under a jacket and wear it standalone in spring.

A model wears a bird print top ($36), skinny leg denim ($46), bracelets ($10) and a wedge sandal ($40) from Reitmans.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Bright and light

Vibrant hues that coloured last year's spring fashions continue to be a strong theme heading into the warmer months. But no need to feel stuck on selecting one "it" colour. There's a full spectrum of bold shades to choose from.

"Some colours stick out," said Laframboise. There's a lot of hot pink, hot orange, turquoise and electric blue.

"But it's not one of those seasons where there's one colour you must get. It's all about colour as a whole."

An easy way to adopt the trend without sacrificing comfort is to consider opting for a brightly-coloured pair of jeans, said Laframboise.

Neon not your flavour? Laframboise said pastel hues — a tried and true springtime staple — are still in vogue, notably softer shades like pale blues and yellows.

Finishing touches

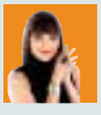
From a coral clutch to a checkered handbag, some of the hot colour and pattern trends in apparel are translating to accessories.

Mixed metal statement jewelry is emerging for spring, with everything from rhinestones to neon colours in the mix, said Laframboise.

Consider pairing your statement necklace with a T-shirt and jeans, or even overtop a collared shirt that has been fully buttoned up, he suggested.

"It's gone from being something dressy that you have at night to the other way around."

Twitter



JEANNE SPACE
Jeanne Beker
life@metronews.ca

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@Jeanne_Beker: Getting a special achievement award at Cdn Screen Awards. If YOU had to thank someone for what you've achieved who would it be? Why?

@MamaGose: you have great style girl love you

@cedricgigoux: a lot of people, and you being one of them. I have been following you since my childhood on Fashion Television. Love you.

@HumberAlumni: Congrats on the Academy Achievement Award (for exceptional contributions to Canadian TV) #FashionTelevision

@hrhnikkiawesome: congrats darling! And I'd thank YOU for being such an awesome influence

The Kit

Canadian street style

Spotted in: Vancouver

Kiks Chua, Graphic Designer

Age: 25

What she's wearing
J. Crew coat, self-made scarf, Everlane tank, Mango skirt, American Apparel tights, Dr. Martens boots

Her inspiration
"I'm a summer dresser so I wear summer pieces all year round under my coats with slight variation. It works!"

THE KIT PHOTOBLOGGER: M'C KENNETH LICON, LITTLEFASHIONISTO.COM

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Flip your condo with style

Staging. Putting your home on the market? Get your condo ready for resale with some designer touches

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

We all know the rules when prepping your home for resale: de-clutter, remove personal items and clean. However there are more things you can do to make your home the talk of your building.

Now, you can always hire a home stager (usually recommended from the selling agent) to help, but as your trusted decorator expert, I'll share my own tricks of the trade to get your place appealing to a new buyer.

Buy accessories that compliment the space you are selling, and not what you think is trendy at the moment.

Putting your decor trademark on a space is not going to make buyers see the potential of owning it themselves.

For instance, if you live in a modern condo with concrete ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows, choose a few strong industrial accents to play up those features: tall clear glass vases, a factory cart coffee table and vintage metal cappuccino maker will help give off that urban vice.

As harsh as this may be, paint away your personality with an updated neutral wall colour. Choose a colour that works with your floor and not necessarily your existing furniture in case you've already moved out and a potential buyer only has the walls and floors to see.

The right colour will ensure that without furnishings the space still looks co-ordinated and tied together. Trick: choose a paint colour that is two shades lighter than the colouring in the floors.

This will make the entire space visually flow, feel bigger and more tied together. Always sway toward cooler tones over warmer ones. Cool tones reflect more light and are less claustrophobic.

In an empty, open-concept space, use area carpets to define living areas. This way potential buyers can imagine a living, dining and office working for them in such an open area.

Choose your view to help with the sell. Install woven scrim shades to hide a bad view yet let light into the room. If you have a great city view then keep the shades up to show it off. Any window in a bathroom or bedroom should offer a privacy shade.

Lower your artwork. Buyers want spaces with high ceilings so by lowering your artwork the ceilings look taller. Simply lower everything two inches — ideally, the middle of your artwork should be 66 inches off the floor.

This is a great trick in condos and lower-level spaces that might only have standard height ceilings.

A new sink, faucet and trend-setting laminate countertop can take 10 years off the age of your kitchen. A chrome restaurant-inspired faucet and dark grey soapstone/concrete coloured counters are always good choices in urban spaces.

Don't invest in having a kitchen renovated for resale; offer the cost of a kitchen reno to reflect in the selling price and let the new homeowner customize the kitchen of their dreams.

Choose the largest closet and pimp it out. A front hall or main bedroom closet fitted with dark wood shelving inserts and fancy rods will always impress a potential buyer.

Install a battery-operated motion light inside the closet. Not only will your closet impress a potential buyer but it will make the closet feel organized and bright.

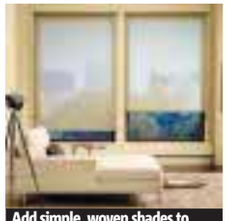
Don't leave a boot tray or a Remove Shoes sign at the front door. Once a potential buyer enters they should feel as if they already own it.

Placing personal messages and signs around make the buyer feel that you still have a presence in the space.

One trendy countertop appliance can set the tone for a fabulous lifestyle to potential buyers. Nespresso's Maestria Creama C Five Hundred Crema, $550, thebay.com.

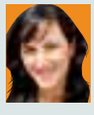
Brighten up a dark closet interior or kitchen counter with an LED stick-up motion light. Sylvania Dot It Golden Dragon Motion Light, $15, homedepot.ca.

A modern faucet teamed with a trend-setting laminate counter top are inexpensive ways to update a kitchen. Ikea's Budskar Kitchen Faucet, $149, ikea.ca.



Add simple, woven shades to offer privacy or help diffuse an undesirable view without sacrificing natural light. Alustra Screen Shades, hunterdouglas.ca.

Vinegar: the super substance is unstoppable



QUEEN OF GREEN
Tovah Paglaro
green@metronews.ca

How can I clean every room with vinegar?

Since there are 1,001 uses for vinegar, you might think there's nothing it can't do. Not true. Vinegar cannot solve world hunger. Nor can it phone your grandmother every Sunday. Short of that, this super substance is practically unstoppable. Especially when it comes to cleaning.

The high acidity level makes vinegar effective for killing mould, bacteria and germs. Regular distilled white vinegar is more than sufficient for most jobs, but for really gross messes, get extra punch by increasing the acidity — pickling vinegar, for example, has seven per cent acidity instead of the average five per cent.

Vinegar in the kitchen

Freshen sponges and dishrags by soaking them overnight in a 1/4 cup of white distilled vinegar and just enough water to cover them. Throw them in the wash and they're as good as new.

Remove soap buildup and odours from the dishwasher by running an empty machine with one cup of white distilled vinegar. Similarly, loosen grime and tackle microwave odour by bringing a bowl of vinegar and water solution to a rolling boil in the microwave for three minutes.

Vinegar in the bathroom

Remove soap buildup with a non-toxic scouring solution. Mix one part salt to four parts white distilled vinegar and say goodbye to soap scum naturally.

Deodorize the toilet bowl and leave it sparkling by soaking the basin with three cups white distilled vinegar for half an hour before scrubbing and flushing

When the bathroom's clean, apply vinegar's magic to your head! Fight dandruff naturally by massaging vinegar into your scalp. Results beat the store-bought shampoos.

Vinegar in the living room

Enjoy crystal-clear windows with equal parts vinegar and water. The first time you try this, chemical residue from your old cleaner might leave streaks. Cut through the grime by spraying with undiluted vinegar.

Restore bright colours to your carpet by brushing on a vinegar solution. Mix one cup white distilled vinegar to every four litres of water. (Best to spot test in an out-of-sight corner.)

Vinegar in the laundry room

Reduce static without chemical-laden dryer sheets by adding half a cup of vinegar to the rinse cycle of your washing machine. As an added benefit, this will preserve the colour of your clothes!

Restore the white to stained socks and dull dishcloths by boiling them briefly in a large pot of water with one cup white distilled vinegar. Let them soak overnight and wash normally.

What can't vinegar do? ISTOCK IMAGES

Vinegar in the kid's room

To clean and disinfect all of the kids' toys, add a good-sized splash of white distilled vinegar to soapy water.

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A technician using a brush to clean ductwork. NADCA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Make your home run more efficiently: clean the ducts

At home. Better air quality, a cleaner home and lower energy costs a few possible benefits

John Santos of Los Angeles wants his home to be a healthy gathering place for family and friends, some of whom are recovering from major illness. As part of his effort, he recently had his home's ductwork professionally cleaned.

"I wanted to make certain the air that they were breathing was as clean as it possibly could be," says Santos, 54, a high school technology teacher. "Especially living in a city like Los Angeles, where the air quality can really be poor and cleaning the air systems can provide value."

Although many homeowners consider duct cleaning a way to make their indoor air cleaner, research on whether it can really create a healthier home is in the early stages.

The Environmental Protection Agency recommends looking into duct cleaning after fires, floods, pest infestations and in hazardous waste situations, or if you can see particles coming out of your ducts. Otherwise, the agency says it's not necessary for the average household.

Tom Keys, president of Atlantic Duct Cleaning in Sterling, Va., says his company has done more than 80,000 duct-cleaning jobs, and that many customers report back that they have better air quality, a cleaner home and lower energy costs. Customers often are surprised at how much debris collected in their ductwork over the years, he says.

"Most of the people who do it, do it for peace of mind," Keys says. His company has found all sorts of items in ductwork beyond dirt and grime, including class rings, rare baseball cards and construction debris from when the home was built.

Jodi Araujo, executive director of the National Air Duct Cleaners Association, says homeowners can tell when ducts are dirty by simply removing a register cover, inserting a camera and clicking a photo.

On the other hand, John DeSilvia, a contractor and host of DIY Network's Rescue My Renovation, doesn't generally recommend duct cleaning to homeowners. It's normal for dirt to accumulate and stick to the sides of air ducts, he says, adding that the exception is if there's visible mould growth.

If you do have ductwork cleaned, he advises getting a few estimates and ensuring that the service you hire uses high-powered equipment to capture what they dislodge. Otherwise, the effort could backfire.

"Any dust and dirt not collected will be distributed throughout your home, causing a bigger problem," DeSilvia says.

If you decide to get your home's ductwork cleaned, expect to pay between $400 and $800 if there's one HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system. If you have more than one zone, you could pay more. That's because duct cleaners don't just clean the ducts, they also clean the furnace and air handler for each unit, which could extend the life of your appliances.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Help! It smells in here!

I don't know what to do with the odours in shoes, suitcases and sporting equipment bags. They're driving me crazy. Any ideas or suggestions?

CHARLES THE BUTLER
askcharlesthebutler@metronews.ca
For more, visit charlesmacpherson.com

Well I do understand that odours can be disruptive and annoying, so let's look at your list, starting with shoes. If it is a running shoe, then a small sprinkle of baking soda in each shoe will help absorb the odour caused by moisture. Drying antistatic sheets will also help.

But take a good look at the shoes. Running shoes in particular do have a life span and once they are done they are done. Suitcases are always great with a dryer antistatic sheet, but after a long trip, always leave the suitcase open for a day or two to fully air it out.

And finally sports equipment bags also need to be aired out regularly and the sports equipment needs to be washed after each and every use.

I know that sounds like a lot of work, but this is really important to keep the bacteria level down, which reduces odour and avoids skin irritations.

But remember, it's essential that you deal with the odour source and get rid of it, not just mask it with fake perfume smells.

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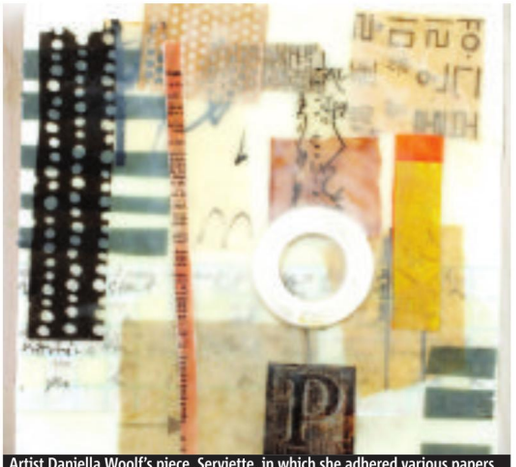
Encaustic applause: artists wax poetic about medium's mystique

Versatile. The wax surface technique can be used on two-dimensional art or with 3D works



Artist Daniella Woolf's piece, Serviette, in which she adhered various papers, including paper napkins and die-cut shapes, with the wax medium, encaustic. INTERWEAVE/F+W MEDIA, JOE COCA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A six-inch-by-six-inch tile piece, where Denver artist Jamie Lang painted the wax medium encaustic over an image transfer. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS//JAMIE LANG

Denver artist Jamie Lang sold nearly all of his small, handmade tiles during a recent crafts show, and he can only guess the reasons why. The adobe tiles are minimally decorated — with a red bicycle or a solitary house — and covered with a thin, smooth layer of wax.

"It was new, something different," Lang said after the show in Boulder, Colo., while other artists packed up their wares to take home.

Lang works in encaustic, an ancient medium of pigment and hot wax that's resurging in popularity.

The wax technique dates to at least the first century AD, according to Lissa Rankin in her book Encaustic Art. Its popularity waned during the Middle Ages and Renaissance with the rise of tempera paints, but was revived during the mid-18th century, says Rankin. Painters Paul Gauguin and Georges Seurat were among those experimenting with it. In the 20th century, encaustic was featured in painter Jasper Johns' work, including his iconic Flag.

Encaustic involves heating beeswax and damar resin, often with added colour, and either pouring or painting the mixture onto a surface. The tree resin helps harden and stabilize the wax. An encaustic surface can be two-dimensional, such as wood or paper, or 3D.

Daniella Woolf, 65, an artist in Santa Cruz, Calif., says she discovered encaustic a decade ago and "completely fell in love with it." Its versatility makes it the "glue" that holds disparate mediums together, says Woolf, author of The Encaustic Studio.

Encaustic can be unpredictable and unwieldy, but that adds an element of surprise and mystique to the results.

The technique can be combined with anything from oil and watercolour paints to chalk, ink, photo transfers and fabric — even plaster and three-dimensional objects. Colours are mixed into or suspended in the wax, while objects are imbedded.

This undated publicity photo provided by Interweave/F+W Media shows artist Daniella Woolf's piece, Stroganoff, in which she preserved her mother's recipes by stitching the cards together and dipping or brushing the ensemble with a wax medium. INTERWEAVE/F+W MEDIA, JOE COCA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The encaustic process is not for the faint of heart. There are some basic safety precautions. The wax medium becomes molten hot when it's ready to use, and if its temperature rises above 200 F, the fumes become toxic.

For this reason, Lang, Woolf and Rankin work in well-ventilated studios. Each recommends having open windows and a fan near the workspace.

"Once (the beeswax and resin) melts down and cools, it's past (having) any kind of the toxic element to it," says Lang.

Additionally, because encaustic involves fusing one layer of wax on top of one or more other layers, a heat source is needed. Woolf uses an open-flame torch. Heat guns and even some irons — specific to the task, not clothes irons — also work. Woolf recommends experimenting to find the equipment that works best. Her book lists basic supplies, as does Rankin's.

"Used carefully, encaustic is safe, natural, luminous, versatile and a great way to either start painting or open up your creativity if you're an experienced artist," says Rankin, of Marin County, Calif.

Encaustic paint starter kits — the colour is pre-mixed with the wax and resin — are available online. Woolf and Lang buy their paint supplies from R&F Handmade Paints' online store. Woolf also teaches workshops for the Kingston, N.Y., paint manufacturer.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Other artists' testimonials

"The medium does things you're not totally expecting. You do have some say in the matter, but there's a 'miraculousness' to it."

Nadine Swahnberg, a Denver, artist and minister.

"Encaustic is fun to do and the product is mysterious and beautiful. I love the great depth you can achieve ... when stuff is about three layers down, it takes on a whole new meaning."

Susan Garwood, a Lincoln, Neb., artist.

"I love it because it allows me to scratch into the surface to discover the image rather than build it in the traditional way."

Mona Marshall of Austin, Texas

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A complete meal contained in one hearty bowl of soup

Meatball and Pasta Soup

This recipe serves six. RYAN SZULC, FROM ROSE REISMAN'S FAMILY FAVORITES (WHITECAP BOOKS)

ROSE REISMAN
for more, visit
rosereisman.com

This is a great soup for the family. It's a complete meal in a bowl. Try using ground chicken, turkey or pork instead of beef. Remember to add an extra tablespoon of bread crumbs if you're using chicken or turkey.

1. Meatballs: combine ground beef, bread crumbs, barbecue sauce, egg, garlic, basil and 2 tbsp of the Parmesan cheese. Form into 1-inch meatballs (you should have enough for about 24 meatballs). Lightly coat nonstick skillet with cooking spray and set over medium heat. Cook the meatballs for about 5 minutes, turning occasionally or until they are browned on all sides. Set aside.

2. To make the soup, lightly coat a large, nonstick pot with cooking spray. Add the oil and set over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté for 5 minutes or until just softened and browned. Stir in the green pepper and carrots and cook for 3 minutes. Stir in the stock, tomato sauce, tomato paste, chili powder and browned meatballs. Bring to a boil, and then reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered, for 15 minutes.

3. Stir in the pasta and simmer for 5 minutes or until the pasta is tender. Serve the soup in bowls, and garnish with remaining 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese. ROSE REISMAN'S FAMILY FAVORITES (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN

Ingredients

Meatballs
- 6 oz lean ground beef
- 3 tbsp seasoned dry bread crumbs
- 2 tbsp barbecue sauce
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp finely chopped garlic
- 1/2 tsp dried basil
- 2 tbsp Parmesan cheese

Soup
- 2 tsp vegetable oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 1/2 tsp finely chopped garlic
- 1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper
- 1/2 cup chopped carrots
- 3 1/2 cups beef (or chicken) stock
- 2 cups tomato pasta sauce
- 2 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1 cup egg noodle pasta
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

For your phone

Relish Soups, Stews & Chilis Recipe Collection (iPad; $1.99)

MIND THE APP
Kris Abel
@RealKrisAbel
life@metronews.ca

Feeling frozen? A hot bowl is a good remedy. Relish Magazine's collection of soups, stews and chilis nourishes all tastes. Imagine Apple Cider Stew, Wild Rice Chowder or Heirloom Bean Chili.

Lunch. Speedy Minestrone

Pasta sauces aren't just for topping noodles. They can also be used as a base for great tasting and hearty Minestrone.

The sauce adds delicious chunks of vegetables without increasing preparation time.

1. In medium saucepan combine pasta sauce, broth, noodles and beans.

2. Bring to boil then reduce to simmer for 8-10 minutes or until noodles are soft, stirring occasionally.

3. Ladle soup into bowls and garnish with 1/4 cup (50 ml) chopped arugula. NEWS CANADA/ FACEBOOK.COM/HEALTHYCHOICECANADA

Ingredients

4 portions
Start to finish: 13 minutes

- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) Healthy Choice Italian Style Vegetables pasta sauce
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) no sodium vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup (50 ml) whole grain rotini noodles
- 1/4 cup (50 ml) low sodium cooked navy beans or kidney beans, rinsed
- 1 cup (250 ml) finely chopped parsley, baby arugula or spinach, to garnish

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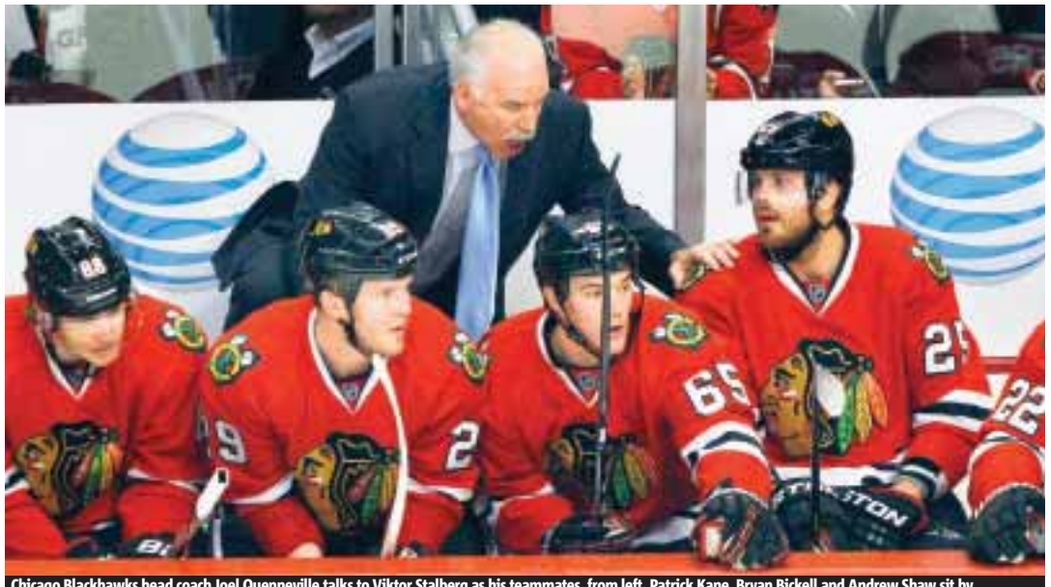


Chicago Blackhawks head coach Joel Quenneville talks to Viktor Stalberg as his teammates, from left, Patrick Kane, Bryan Bickell and Andrew Shaw sit by during a game on Jan. 27. Forward Patrick Sharp says Quenneville has played a key role in the team's record-breaking start. JOHN SMIERCIAK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Hawks learn from last year's mistakes

NHL. Chicago boasts 19 game point streak going into tonight's match

While the streak goes on and the Chicago Blackhawks pile up points, the same words are repeated over and over.

It's about improving each game, they say, and how you finish the season. Trying to win every night is another common refrain.

The uniformity of the message is a testament to the mindset of the streaking Blackhawks, but it's also a vote of confidence for the gruff conductor of the best start in NHL history. While a balanced attack and two hot goaltenders get all the credit, coach Joel Quenneville's focus on Chicago's most glaring problems from last season has played a key role in the Blackhawks' record-breaking run.

"It's nice having some familiarity back behind the bench," forward Patrick Sharp said. "He knows how to push buttons and motivate. I feel like the team that returned from last year had a head start knowing what Q demands of us, how he wants us to play. It all goes hand in hand."

"We were hoping to get off to a good start," Quenneville said. "We looked at our schedule. We had a brutal schedule, when we play 10 out of 12 on the road. So we're thinking hopefully we can put ourselves in a position when we come home we'd be in a decent spot. But we didn't see this happening, for sure."

This run actually dates to last season in more ways than one. The Blackhawks have earned at least one point in 25 consecutive games overall, the third-longest point streak in NHL history.

It's the turnaround in a couple of Chicago's biggest weaknesses from last year that has fuelled the confidence.

"The areas that we talked about going into the season, things that we had to improve upon, I think are much better," Quenneville said. "Our penalty killing for sure. Our goals-against average was, we had hit a different note last year as far as the quantity of goals we were giving up, the type of goals we were giving up. I think we've shored up our defensive-zone coverage, that's helped us. Our power play is more effective."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Record streak

Chicago set the NHL record for a season-opening points streak when it beat San Jose 2-1 on Friday night to make it 17 in a row.

- Two more victories later, and the Blackhawks are at 19 heading into Thursday night's game at rival St. Louis.

NBL Canada

Ottawa team nixes nickname

Ottawa's newest basketball team has dropped plans to nickname the club "Toma-Hawks" following outcry on social media about the move.

The owners of Ottawa's expansion team in the National Basketball League of Canada made the original announcement Tuesday, but backed off the next day because of the controversy surrounding the nickname.

At Tuesday's news conference, team co-owner Gus Takkale said he consulted with First Nations groups before deciding on the name. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

World Baseball Classic

Canada names its starting pitchers

Canada has named its three starting pitchers for the first round of the World Baseball Classic.

Baseball Canada's Greg Hamilton says Chris Leroux, Shawn Hill and Scott Mathieson will take the mound next week against Italy, Mexico and the United States.

Canada, which opens the WBC against Italy on March 8 in Arizona, before facing Mexico on March 9 and the United States on March 10, has yet to decide which teams the starters will pitch against.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pittsburgh Pirates relief pitcher Chris Leroux THE CANADIAN PRESS

A-Rod's charity donated 1% of gains: Report

Alex Rodriguez JONATHAN DANIEL/GETTY IMAGES FILE

New York Yankees superstar Alex Rodriguez gave away only one per cent of proceeds raised in the first year of his non-profit charity, the A-Rod Family Foundation, the Boston Globe reports.

According to the report, Rodriguez raised $403,862 US in 2006, but donated only $5,090 to charitable causes.

The published report says that the foundation operated by Rodriguez donated $5,000 to Jay-Z's Shawn Carter Scholarship Fund and $90 to a Little League baseball club in Miami.

A year later, in 2007, the Internal Revenue Service stripped the A-Rod Family Foundation of its tax-exempt status after it failed to submit the proper paperwork, according to the report.

Boston reporter Callum Borchers noted in the story that non-profit experts recommend that foundations devote 65 to 75 per cent of every dollar directly to the stated mission.

"Athletes' charities are subject to many pitfalls," Greg Johnson, executive director of the Sports Philanthropy Project in Boston, told the Boston Globe, "because most of them are not trained in how to raise and distribute money, and it's difficult." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Below threshold

- The Alex Rodriguez charity information came to light as part of a Globe review of more than 150 IRS filings in the U.S. by 50 non-profits operated by professional athletes.
- The report found that many highly paid athletes fail to meet the threshold of donating up to 75 per cent of every dollar directly to their mission.

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers.

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Both the good and the bad points of your personality will stand out in sharp relief today. There is no reason at all why you should disguise your true nature. Others only disapprove because they are jealous.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Make a special effort to think before you act today, as you could easily go over the top in some way. Even the most cautious of bulls could say or do things that might damage their reputation, so be careful.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Friends and colleagues will do the opposite of what you ask of them today. Now that you know that you know how to get 'round them, don't you? Ask them to do the complete reverse of what it is you want!

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
However tough things may get over the next 24 hours, you must not compromise your principles or show signs of weakness. You may not be in a position of strength but you do possess formidable strength of character.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
If you have moments of self-doubt today don't just ignore them and plow ahead regardless. Listen to what your instincts are trying to tell you and, just this once, be a bit more cautious in your actions.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
There may be nothing you cannot do if you put your mind to it but it will pay you to be a bit more selective in your goals. Some things come naturally to you and those are the things you should focus on.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Yes, the truth hurts, but it will hurt even more if you try to avoid it. That applies especially to your career where some kind of setback is likely to annoy you. But what is it trying to teach you?

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Your life has become far too complicated and you must find ways to simplify your everyday activities. Forget about all those big ideas swimming around inside your head — get serious about details.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You may be impulsive by nature but the planets warn if you overdo it between now and the weekend you will need to give yourself a lot of time to recover — time you cannot really afford to waste.

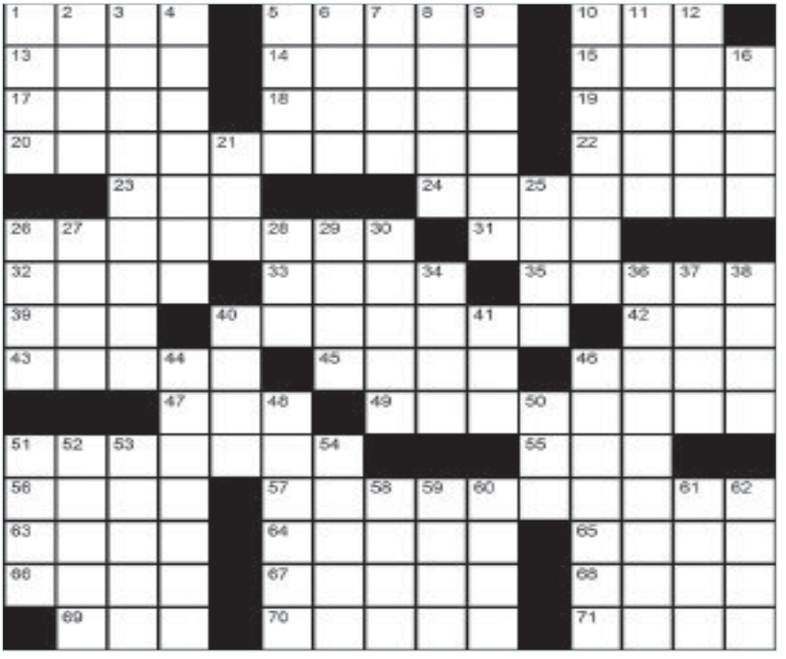
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
What you learn about other people is useful. What you learn about yourself is priceless. Something will happen today that gives you an insight into the way your subconscious works — an insight that leads to greater happiness.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Many things are changing and you may not be entirely happy about it. But deep down you know it's time to move on and if you can't make the move yourself fate will make it for you. Your move!

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Venus, planet of personal love, links with Neptune, planet of universal love, in your sign today, making this the ideal time to reach out and change people's lives. Use your gift of compassion. SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword: Canada Across and Down

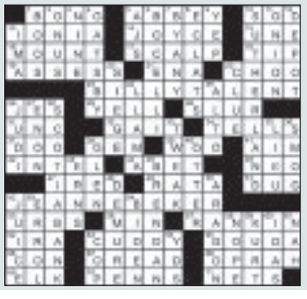
BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



Across
1. Lion's share
5. Belonging to Sweden's biggest band
10. New Zealand parrot
13. Sacred Buddhist peak
14. Hen's home
15. "This is __ _ big mistake!"
17. Cartooning, for short
18. __ Max ($50 million top prize draw)
19. Shakespearean word
20. Reality series now with a Canadian version on Slice: 2 wds.
22. __-and-haws
23. Bird's beak
24. Toronto's big airport
26. Boardroom events
31. Canada __ (Brand of ginger ale)
32. Kind of musical work
33. Macbeth's burial place
35. Cain's biblical son
39. Always, to a poet
40. Western province
42. Gladiator's 7
43. Bird beds
45. "__ la Douce" (1963)
46. Photog's originals, for short
47. _ _ _ Speedwagon
49. Colleen of "Anne of Green Gables"
51. "Wind __ My Wings" by Midler
55. And: German
56. __. donor (Unknown benefactor)
57. Assume control: 2 wds.
63. "Oops!... _ __ It Again" by Britney Spears
64. __ by the rules
65. Played-with-a-bow instrument
66. "How to __ a Guy in 10 Days" (2003)
67. Tricked
68. Eye part
69. Nourished
70. Make amends
71. Water bird

Down
1. Biblical land where Moses was buried
2. Prefix to 'potent' (All-powerful)
3. Canadian History: Land lords of New France
4. Donut-middle treats
5. Folkie Mr. Guthrie
6. Winter footwear, just one
7. The pair
8. Take _ __ (Move foreward)
9. Stashed
10. Movie director Ms. Bigelow
11. "The Princess Bride" (1987) star, Cary __
12. Texas landmark to 'remember', The __
16. Formal org.
21. Baseball stat.
25. Expanse
26. Big name in faucets
27. Sword sort
28. Goose egg
29. Desert in Asia
30. Ventriloquy puppet of classic TV, Mortimer __
34. Weapon: French
36. The 'O' of BTO
37. Slang-style smokes
38. School subj.
40. On the ocean
41. Shooting marble
44. Was a hot topic on Twitter
46. Canadian territory since 1999
48. Federal government's centre
50. "Er, what?"
51. Release-from-the-slammer money
52. Arnold Schwarzenegger movie, "__ Days" (1999): 2 wds.
53. Racket
54. Custom
58. Metric weight, for short
59. Biblical garden
60. Give up
61. Movie-__
62. Flair

Yesterday's Crossword



Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

		7				5		
	9		1		7		6	
2	3						7	9
		3	4		2	7		
4								8
		1	6		9	4		
3	1						5	7
	7		9		5		1	
		8				2		

Yesterday's Sudoku

4	7	6	8	9	2	3	5	1
5	9	2	3	7	1	6	8	4
1	3	8	5	4	6	9	7	2
9	8	7	1	3	4	2	6	5
6	4	5	9	2	7	8	1	3
2	1	3	6	8	5	7	4	9
8	6	1	2	5	9	4	3	7
3	2	4	7	1	8	5	9	6
7	5	9	4	6	3	1	2	8

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